



Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture

Being A “Double Agent”

An ontological inquiry into the Other in
intercultural everyday-life through auto-
ethnographic and artistic approaches

Master's Thesis

Ziyu Yu

Aalto University School of Arts, Design and
Architecture

Nordic Visual Studies and Art Education

Spring 2020

Acknowledgment	4
Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Start of inquiry and Research questions	6
Designing the Research	9
Movement one	9
Movement two	11
Theoretical frame: the Other and nomadism ontology	14
Intentionality and Object: As fundamental constitution of perception	15
Others and other minds: A paradox of ontology	16
The Other	18
Interculturalism, nomadism, alternative ontology	22
An Intercultural World as the field of all inquiries	22
Deleuzian ontology of “immanence” and nomadology	24
Methodology	26
Crystallisation Framework and Interdisciplinary Inquiry	26
Auto-ethnography and Phenomenology	27
Visual methodology: Visual auto-ethnography, Artistic research, and Film Art	29
Tradition: Film art and humanistic research	29
Visual auto-ethnography	30
Artistic research through film making	31
Stories	37

Story One: a narrative of "China"	37
Reflection and analysis:	40
Part I: Desire towards the Other and recognition of freedom	40
Part II: Doubled Burdens: Confusions and discomfort from both cultures	42
Part III: Who is the Other: Culture as a "superego", a unified sense of Subject as experienced	44
Story Two: Being Among Finns	49
Reflection and Analysis:	51
Part I: the film	51
Part II: The Other as mental/psychological experience	51
Story Three: The visions of Telefonplan (The one who is the viewer, the one who is to be viewed)	54
Reflections and analysis:	54
Dramatisation and multiple models of being	54
Research Findings and reflections	56
A model of Freedom? The Deleuzian idea of becoming and the Other	56
The ontological metaphor: Double Agent	58
Visual methods and art, as approaches to tackle issues of ontology and subjectivity	60
A touch in Lacanian psychoanalysis in terms of the perception of the Other and Self	61
References	63
Appendix	67

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank:

My advisor Tiina Pusa for all the support and advice during the whole process.

Anette Göthlund and Ulla Lind for all the supports and encouragements during after my study in Sweden.

My supervisor Mira Kallio-Tavin for inspirations and advice.

My parents for financial supports during my master study.

Daniel Lundström Ramírez, my boyfriend, who has always been there for me during the long process, offered emotional support, encouragement, and understanding when I encountered difficulties and confusions, and also performed in and made sounds effects for my film.

Abstract

This research is an investigation into the phenomenon of the Other from an ontological perspective in an intercultural everyday-life setting. It is centred by the classic concept of "the Other" in phenomenology, and is unfolded by tackling the setting of being where the non-Western subject experiences her subjectivity as the Other in a Western cultural setting.

This research uses auto-ethnographical approaches to gather/create data that can express or reflect subtle and complex contexts of such a condition of being, and then analyses the data through crystallised lenses of various theories and art production.

By doing this research, I hope to gain an in-depth understanding of being as a modern nomad in different cultures, especially as a human subject who chose freely to live and study in a drastically different cultural setting other than the home land. The intercultural experiences provide different perspectives of figuring out the World (or Worlds), but also bring up confusions of identity, subjectivity, and the ontological "crisis" that results from the shifting of perspectives and standing points of experiencing. Experiences as such require additional or alternative interpretations of otherness for the human subject in order to make sense of her own being.

Key Words

The Other, Interculturalism, Nomadism, Ontology, Artistic Research, Auto-ethnography

Introduction

The metaphysical desire does not long to return, for it is desire for a land not of our birth, for a land foreign to every nature, which has not been our fatherland and to which we shall never betake ourselves.

---- Emmanuel Levinas (1979)

Start of inquiry and Research questions

Being in different cultures other than home is a phenomenon and a cultural issue that have been discussed a lot in the culture researches, anthropology and philosophy of today. Inspired by my very own experiences of living and studying in Nordic countries as an Asian, this research adheres to efforts made by researchers in understanding contemporary nomadism and issues of inter-culturalism.

This research focuses specifically on the issue of the Other and otherness that one experiences living in another culture, which leads to the discussion of ontology of being intercultural. The research investigates the issue of the Other and otherness through multifaceted crystallised qualitative research methods from auto-ethnographic and artistic perspectives.

The Other is a classic term of phenomenology and psychoanalysis to describe the being of human beings other than the subject herself. It has also strayed from the origin and is being used broadly in cultural and social studies nowadays. It has the important symbolic significance of cultural and political discourses in contemporary studies of culture and visibility. In critical visual studies, the Other describes a position in linguistics or psychology in contrary to the Self, which embraces an idea about certain groups of people indicated by symbolic visual representations of them that are reductively fixed on purpose to satisfy the desire and egoic hegemony of a presumed symbolic 'White-male Subject' that is basically fixed as the subject and authority of a structural narrative as well as the subject of power. The term is well known for its profound meaning in Lacanian social psychological analysis according to Homer (2005), as well as the use as a critical point of view in anthropology and ethnology researches (e.g. Fabian, 1983), post-colonialism studies (e.g. Bhabha, 1983), and feminism studies (e.g. de Beauvoir, 1960 see

Simons, 1986; Butler, 2015). This research however, besides all the discussions about the Other mentioned above, is aiming at going back to its fundamental phenomenological and ontological root. That is, to understand my being in relation to the Other when being in the Other's land.

Some may argue that, with the contemporary understanding of nomadism and mobility, we should stay critical towards the concept of the Other because there has been a trend in philosophy and culture studies to create an alternative paradigm of nomadism and mobility (e.g. Richards, 2015) that stays rejective towards the conservative "system". However, from my experiences of travelling and living as a nomad in different cultures, I notice that the Other, or otherness as a symbol or a structure of being, is still crucial in intercultural interactions. If nomadism and mobility has already transformed into a symbol of flux as thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari maintained both in theories and praxis, a lot of phenomena of my experiences would not be able to be explained and understood in a way that makes sense to me.

One crucial fact in my experiences as a nomad is my "given" identity. In a criticised conservative Euro-centric narrative, my identity as an Asian female may carry a lot of symbolic meanings that is connected to power and identity politics. Honestly, I can not say the criticised structure of identity politics does not exist in nowadays Nordic countries anymore. Thus as an individual who lives in the body of an Asian female, I had the burden of passively carrying on the symbolic roles of the Other in relation to a presumed Western culture Subject in the Western-centric narrative. The phenomenon of being the Other in another culture, which historically or traditionally has been considered to be higher in the power hierarchy of global narratives, triggered my curiosity about the ontological question about my own subjectivity when being in the Western world. I learned and experienced my otherness relative to the Western world in my everyday-life experiences and from the knowledge I gained through my studies. However, I am still an active human subject who perceives her own being and subjectivity as transcendental and absolute from the ponder of cogito. Thus I am the absolute Subject to myself, I do not want be the Other to myself. This paradox of being the Other and being the Subject forced me to go deeper into investigation of the issue of the Other living in another culture from an ontological perspective.

A lot of efforts have been made in terms of post-colonialism and feminism to antagonise the conservative idea of the Other which embraces a fixed power structure (the Male/Western as the constituting subject and Female/Non-western as the fixed Other to be desired). In addition to those critical point of views, I form this research based on a first-person perspective narrative from being the Other and the subject at the same time in a foreign culture to challenge the conservative structure in cultural practices, and open a discussion about ontology at the moments when we see the Other within us because the Other transforms from a personal experience and phenomenological question into a cultural symbol that in return influences the perception and the performative discourses we make senses from. A human subject has to "be" with its absolute presence in its own consciousness, as the *cogito* suggested, but being the Other is learned from others' constitutions of the world through the culture practices and communications in the others' world where my own subjective vision and my constitution of the world is challenged.

The first-person perspective is important because it provides additional and alternative narratives from subjective experiences which are deliberately ignored and concealed in a symbolic "truth" that is constructed to be perceived as objective. By looking into my first-person experiences I can reveal the complexity and the ontological crisis of the intriguing position of being the Other and the Subject in foreign cultures, as well as gather data about the subtle but important meanings in personal experiences that would not be conveyed from a distant or "objective" standpoint. As an Asian female junior researcher, I found that my experiences in Nordic countries could be a fruitful reference when trying to understand the ontological issue of the Other. The symbolic fixity in representation of the Other, or the stereotype, as Bhabha (1983) pointed out, was the main tactic in culture to limit a certain group of people within their political and cultural disadvantages. On contrary to the symbolic fixity, my body experiences as an individual subject who inhabits the body of the Other therefore can serve as a counter power to antagonise the impossible fixity and dull repetition of the Other in both languages and images. The aim of this research is to offer such possibility to understand the empirical being in another culture as an active constituting human subject, to gain an in-depth understanding of ontology as modern nomad both as the Other and the Subject.

The inquiries of this research start with an initial ethnographical and phenomenological question: how could and did I experience my own otherness in my very own subjective body and consciousness in a foreign culture?

The research tries to investigate the condition of a phenomenological human subject in foreign territory where the cultural and political discourses of the host land marked her as the Other and made her experience and witness her own otherness. A further question then arises from the conflicted cognition process about the Subject and the sense of otherness of this human subject: *how would the ontological relation between the Subject and the Other be, after taking into consideration this juxtaposition in her very own embodied subjective experiences?*

Designing the Research

Movement one

At an individual level, othering is ethically mutual from a phenomenological perspective, as Merleau-Ponty's "gaze meets another gaze" (2012) and Levinas' "face-to-face" (1979) suggests, through communication, but when it comes to a dialogue between an individual and a culture appearing as a whole, the process can be much more intriguing. In my case, as an individual Asian female in the white-dominated Nordic countries, the Other I encountered does not always appear as individuals with whom an ethical dialogue is available. Instead, I encountered institutions and bigger cultural structures which made it more difficult to pin-point the embodiment of the Other.

It is through various experiences of embodiments of the Other and subtle affections and meanings through institutional cultural interactions, that I feel it and see it. To convey or to show the experience that intrigued me and triggered this research, efforts on depictions and explicitness of empirical data are needed. My first goal of this research is *to reveal the phenomenon of paradox positions when experiencing the subject's own otherness in*

social and cultural situations, and to present the phenomenon to the readers in an engagingly explicit and visual way.

Movement one is thus designed to achieve the first goal. That is to *make the question and phenomenon of paradoxical otherness visible through auto-ethnographical data and analysis*. Auto-ethnography is an important approach to qualitative inquiries when it comes to reflexivity of certain cultural and social phenomena from an individual's bodily experience. It is a good way of tackling body experiences, subjective narratives, and their relation to the big picture of culture and society. Since my question is a phenomenological question about my being and the world I live in, auto-ethnography could be a well suited way of gathering empirical data and reflecting on the questions. I start the investigation by looking through my body experiences from two years of living and studying in Nordic countries.

Auto-ethnography provides me a possibility to see the relation between myself and the social discourses of the foreign host culture in a reflexive way. With the better understandings about social contexts, I can compare and analyse the phenomenon of experiencing my otherness through my own subjectivity in a more explicit way, which can lead to a deeper discussion about the ontological relation between the Subject and the Other when being in another culture.

I use an auto-ethnographical approach in this movement to collect stories and moments of my life experiences, to make the conflict between my subjectivity and my otherness visible. The field of data collection is my two years of studying and living experiences in Nordic countries as a NoVA student, focusing on the moments when I was othering or being othered, and encountering confusions, conflicts, and emotions. The data is presented as auto-biographical narratives in both verbal and visual forms that show different layers and aspects of the question of the Other for the future analysis.

I show the data in forms of three stories I collected and organised among my field notes. Each story is representative of one important angle of the Other complex in my life experiences of living in another culture. The first two stories are presented in the form of narrative writing, where the second story was analysed through the method of artistic

research to gain an understanding of affective and subtle aspects of the experiencing. The third story is shown in the form of a video that is cut into a narrative structure, of which the raw materials were from visual auto-ethnographical video note clips.

Movement two

Another issue should be discussed is the structure of experiencing one's own otherness. When I go through the experience of witnessing my own otherness, I realise that there must be a subject who is othering me from her subjective perspective to complete the structure of the experience. If the subject is someone other than me, then the experience of my own otherness could be seen as the evidence of other minds, of which the existence is generally considered as an enigma in philosophy. If the subject is myself, then I would ask why and how I other myself for my own subjectivity?

The simpler explanation would be the former one, that the subject to whom I realise my otherness is other minds. I somehow learned and adapted the Other's perspective of experiencing and constituting the World, and I acknowledged the Other's freedom by realising and accepting my otherness to it. This explanation is adhered to the masochism attitude towards the Other that Sartre stressed:

Thus I have a comprehension of this ontological structure: I am responsible for my being-for-others, but I am not the foundation of it. It appeared to me therefore in the form of a contingent given for which I am nevertheless responsible; the Other founds my being in so far as this being is in the form of the 'there is'. (Sartre, 2003)

However, this approach to comprehend my being in relation to the Other seems so extreme to me that I have to reject my own freedom to be able to understand my own otherness experienced. Also, if I did adapt this attitude to observe my otherness, I would not even have the confusion of a paradoxical structure of ontology at the first place. Instead of taking up the position of a free constituting subject to whom I exist in my object-state (Sartre, 2003), the other culture more likely provides the possibility for me to

see myself from a different angle. Being in the other culture is like a mirror that can reflect another façade of me that otherwise could never be seen by myself.

Although it may sound bizarre, I argue that I experience my otherness not in the structure of "being-for-others", but in a structure where I am the subject who sees the otherness of myself. I am the one whose freedom is acknowledged by realising my own otherness.

This understanding challenges the traditional dichotomy of Self/Other, Subject/Object when it comes to the understanding of being. Hegel talked about the synthesis of Self/Other in which one can not be without the other, while Levinas talked about the infinite longing or desire to the Other without which one cannot be. However, few traditional theories talk about embracing one's otherness in her own freedom. So the second movement is aiming at *offering a new angle or way of thinking about otherness in one's ontological being in another culture, to open the gate to future research.*

The inquiry is mainly embedded in the analytical process of the empirical data created, I analyse through various qualitative methods of inquiry in movement two under the organisation of the frame of crystallisation. Ellingson outlines principles of crystallisation:

which can include a deep and thick description, attention to the complexity of interpretation, use of more than one form of inquiry (e.g., interviews, ethnography, poetry, auto-ethnography), and reflexivity and Truth (Vik & Bute, 2009). (Ellingson, 2009)

Crystallisation is the perfect method for this research to organise data, theories, and art making together to reach the final goals.

This the case of this research, the different aspects of crystallisation includes:

1. Ethnographical analysis of my experiences and structural issues of the Other in Nordic countries.
2. Art making as a process of data analysis and inquiry. An art-making process that provide an additional angle to analyse and understand affective aspects of my experiences of my otherness, bringing subtle and aesthetical knowledge of the phenomenon into discussion.

3. Triangulation: A dialogue about ontology and the Other in an analysis that is between different theoretical angles (e.g. phenomenology, Deleuzian concept of Nomadology)

Theoretical frame: the Other and nomadism ontology

In this chapter I give the backgrounds of the concept of the Other I refer to throughout this thesis. I refer the Other to the classic concept or thesis of phenomenology, that is very essential to the existence and experience of the Self. I begin the investigation of research questions by viewing it through the lens of phenomenology, however, I also reflect my questions about the term in a phenomenological theoretical frame and compare it to other theoretical models in chapter 5 to gain a crystallised analysis result of the ontology of a nomad or being in another culture.

Phenomenology is the science of experience that describes both experience and things as they appear in experience (Smith, 2016). It has the interest of a first-person perspective which has been motivated by an attempt to understand the nature of objectivity and by the interest in subjectivity of consciousness (Zahavi, 2012). In this research, a first-person perspective experience is essential to all questions and inquiries. The research question arose from embodied experience, and data is collected through my embodied experiences and as how it appeared to my mind. To deal with what the Other means to me in the situation of living abroad, I would have to refer to a paradigm which can provide a way of thinking that credits first-person experience and explains the relation between experience, objectivity, and subjectivity well. My inquiry starts with phenomenology because it is the only way for me to articulate and understand my experience in relation to the intentionality toward the Lifeworld (Husserl, 1913 see Smith, 2016) I'm living in. The way we experience the Lifeworld is fundamentally the way we experience the Other and the Self.

There are several important concepts in phenomenology that provide essential theoretical grounds that constitute my research design. Since the paradox of the subjective being and the being of others is a question that has been encountered and discussed in phenomenology.

Intentionality and Object: As fundamental constitution of perception

As the fundamental contributor to the phenomenology movement, Husserl sees experience (Erfahrung) as the centre of the truth of science in his phenomenology paradigm, for its importance in Kantian natural cognition (Husserl, 1913 see Zahavi, 2012).

Husserl's important thought of transcendental phenomenology and transcendental subjectivity provided a radical turn in western philosophy to look into the essence of consciousness and cognition of the world from a subjective perspective. The subject is understood as an embodied and socially and culturally embedded being-in-the-world (Zahavi, 2012).

The efforts of Husserl released embodied experiences and consciousness from the oversimplified hegemony of psychologism "truth" of science about human minds. Thus the powers of subjectivity and embodied experiences were valued in philosophy of being since then.

In the cognition progress , we discover the "World" in which the totality of individual objects makes up the "Reality" (Husserl, 1913 see Smith, 2016). In this world-to-be-experienced, Objects appear as phenomena to the experiencing subject (the "I", the self).

Objects in Husserlian phenomenology refers to entities in the Lifeworld and are external to the subject which appears with the quality of objectivity thus for the subject to know and experience as "objective" entities. The "objectivity" in Object that our minds tend to value and trust is partially rooted in intentionality of consciousness, so are the "things" that make a phenomenon appear to the mind as "untruthful". In another word, the Object is not objective in itself, but in our perception. Our intentionality toward the Object and the Object itself can not be separated from each other, they both constitute our perception of Object.

The focus on intentionality is one of the Phenomenological tradition's most enduring legacies, finding its way into almost every aspect of philosophical work on the mind

(Smith, 2016). Intentionality in phenomenology is very much about the transcendental frame of a knowing mind and related Kant's Copernican turn in epistemology. It indicates the directness and tendency of knowing and experiencing the Object, and it is defined by the transcendental property of mind and consciousness. However, intentionality should not be understood as conscious intentions, but the transcendental quality of consciousness which influences the way that perception and consciousness form.

Intentionality and Object constitute a synthesis of phenomenon of perception. The objects of intentional experiences would be Objects in Husserl's sense, entities the reality of which transcend our consciousness of them. And intentionality marks out the most basic fact of experience: that objects are there for us (Smith, 2016).

This experiencing and cognitive model of knowing the Object also constitutes the fundamental structure of knowing the Other. The Other appears to us with a body or form which assembles the Object, we first recognise the body of the Other as part of the world-to-be-experienced, and then we recognise (or deny) the Other as a transcendental "being-in-herself" as we are and thus develop the perception and attitude towards the Other.

Others and other minds: A paradox of ontology

Other people appear to us as analogs of the Object in the Lifeworld, but from how they appear to us, we think they exist as we do based on the similarity of their outward behaviour to ours; they are human beings instead of mere objects. But at the same time, when we observe another human we perceive only outward signs of mentality, not the mentality itself (Smith, 2016).

So the first question of the Other is the one of other bodies and other minds. It is easy for us to know the other body since we can know its physical being as we know the Object in the world. But when it comes to other minds, the situation could be intriguing. What we know is the relations between behaviour and mentality of our own minds, but we do not know for sure if the other minds really exist. This issue formed the sceptic of the other mind. We can know others through sensory and perceptions as we know the Object,

through the body of the other, but from how the other appear to us (the physical form of human, the behaviours), it is only logical to deduct that the other person is a similar conscious being as oneself. But we do not have any positive evidence of the other's consciousness and mentality, neither can we know or articulate it.

However, besides the sceptic, there are also different attitudes and perceptions about other minds. According to phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, we encounter another consciousness and recognise it through the sensorial and affective moments. Merleau-Ponty(2012) describe it as "gaze meets another gaze" , and Levinas(1979) "face to face" encounter. Once we are certain about the existence of another mind, there comes the second question of the Other: an ontological paradox that must be answered.

Merleau-Ponty pointed out the paradox position in the perceiving process when the knowing subject encounters other human subjects in his book *Phenomenology of Perception*. It is not a big problem to perceive the body of others as distinguished from me and place it in the world of objects, but I also think of her as a consciousness, a being-in-itself as I. Henceforth the paradox is created: the thinker and I are analogues as constituting subjects, and consciousness thus came into a form of plurality, but "in so far as I constitute the world, I can not conceive another consciousness, for it too would have to constitute the world and, at least as regards this other view of the world, I should not be this constituting agent."(2012)

This paradox that Merleau-Ponty pointed out is the metaphysical manifesto of the paradox I am facing. As a being in-itself, I can not embrace another constituting being-in-itself because being of other minds challenges my own transcendental subjectivity. This encounter with another conscious being ignited the ponder about how I should consider and treat the other since it is not merely an Object in the world that I constitute. Is it like a competition between constitutions and should everyone fight for becoming the absolute Subject who desires and possesses the Other?

Phenomenologists offered several different ways to tackle this. Merleau-Ponty suggested that my body and the other's are one whole, two sides of one and the same

phenomenon, and that the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Instead of lying between I and others, the division of ontology lies between consciousness and the bodies (my body and other bodies, both as parts of the world).

Sartre also listed three different attitudes towards other humans, and engaged the metaphysical alterity, the Other, as the signifier of others in the ontological structure, into the discussion. The three attitudes are the basic ways to perceive and treat the Other shared by lots of phenomenologists. They are: love, language, masochism; indifference, desire, hate, sadism; “being with” and the “we”, co-existence (Sartre, 2003).

The idea of co-existence and co-presentation is well accepted and embraced by phenomenologists: The alternative to the above picture is to maintain that, in observing another human, we are not aware of mere behaviour but of the other’s experiential life itself. According to Smith:

This is a view endorsed by Husserl (1931, Fifth Meditation), Stein (1917), and Scheler (1923, Part 3) (for contemporary versions, see Gallagher, 2008; Smith, 2010) [...] As Stein puts it, for the case in which an emotion is seen in another’s face, ‘the countenance is the outside of sadness. Together they form a natural unity’ (1917, pp. 76–7). (Smith 2016).

However, I found Sartre’s manifestation of the first two attitudes towards the Other also very important in the understanding of the treatment of other humans. From my experience, it is not always the co-existence attitude that is achieved and negotiated in practices.

The Other

Among all the applications and meanings of the term *the Other* there is always a metaphysical relation between the presumed Self and the Other, and this relation appears in different social discourses with different symbolic meanings that constitute the complexity of the Other in the overall picture. Metaphysically, it is about the sense of

Subject in relation to other human beings, the expanded subjective consciousness, and where to mark the boundary between the one self and the others in cultural and social practices.

The metaphysical Other is a phenomenological issue to start with. In Lacan's and Beauvoir's studies for example, the thoughts intersected and were inspired by the phenomenological point of view about perception, consciousness, and others. According to Homer (2005) Lacan was philosophically a phenomenologist because he agreed that objects do not exist independently as things in the world separate from our perception of them but are intimately linked to human consciousness. And in her collaboration with phenomenologist Sartre, de Beauvoir was the first one to address herself to the problem of the Other, a concern which later became very prominent in Sartre's work (Simons, 1986).

Sartre, together with Levinas, left me the most influences on the term of the Other in the contexts of this research. Levinas (1979) highlighted ethics in his discussion about otherness, probably in connection with his own experience as a Jewish descendant and French prisoner of Germany during World War II. He connected ethics with phenomenological transcendence and ontological differences, and termed his philosophy "Humanism of the Other". For Levinas, the metaphysical desire of being, which for its own sake can never be satisfied, is constantly looking for an unknown land. The elsewhere or the other, is called *other*, and the metaphysical desire tends toward something else entirely, is the absolute *other* (Levinas, 1979).

However, the same and the other can not encounter in a way that they merge into a totality of the world around the subjective being eventually, as Husserl or Heidegger may have argued, for the other has its absolute intact alterity that can not be colonised by the same. The absolute other is the Other (Levinas, 1979). The Other, as I understand, refers to the ontology of difference itself, and the immanent otherness in every being in the relation to a knowing subject. The ego can never grasp the Other and constitute a totality by categorising others in its own perception, therefore the desire of the Other that can never be satisfied, it is infinity. The ego and the Other coexist in a transcendental infinity.

Levinas' insight of the absolute alterity of the Other is fundamental to the ontology of the Other in phenomenology, and his adoption of the term embraces the ethics attitude towards the Other: love, affections, communications, and most importantly, be open to a real dialogue where the transcendental alterity of the Other is respected.

Sartre (2003) also adopted the term the "Other" in a sense of absolute alterity other than the Self, using the term to refer to metaphysical otherness of consciousness, the structural opposite to the Self. For Sartre, there can be different ways to perceive and treat the Other depending on the differing beliefs or experiences about being of the other human. As mentioned above, he listed three different attitudes towards the Other: *Sadism*, to recognise my freedom in the desire towards, and the object-state of, the Other. *Masochism*, to recognise my being as being-for-other, that I exist in the object-state in the Other's desire. *Co-existence*, that I develop the perception of ontology of I and the Other as "being-with" and "we", to embrace the Other as the extended sense of Self, which is similar to Merleau-Ponty's (2012) manifestation of "two sides of same phenomenon".

Kallio-Tavin (2013) also looked into Levinas and articulated the usage of the concept "the Other" in three different ways in her dissertation:

First, the 'Other', when capitalized, refers to the philosophical and sometimes psychoanalytical notion of otherness, the ontologically given alterity [...] Second, the 'other', when not capitalized, either refers to another person, namely my research partner, or applies to the field of social justice. Third, Levinas's notion of others' otherness (alterity in people) makes this division between the capitalized and uncapitalized form of the word much more complex. (Kallio-Tavin, 2013).

The term "capitalized" constitutes another aspect of the meaning of the Other in this research, that is the Other as a symbol entangled with complex of social relations and productions.

My adaptation of the term the "Other" contains two aspects:

1. An ontologically given alterity, deriving from a traditional ontological thinking of cogito. Thus the Other is a metaphysical alterity to the Self.
2. A concept or a structure of viewing other people that is entangled with complex of social relations, productions, and desire.

An Intercultural World as the field of all inquiries

A globalised world with hyper-mobility is where this research happens. Phenomena of intense global mobilisation of the contemporary world has been observed and conceptualised by anthropologists, ethnographers, and philosophers. Two concepts are crucial as theoretical premises of this research: interculturalism and nomadism. The two concepts described and profiled the World where my experiences took place, and based on which analysis of ontology and the Other issues can bear embodied meanings in actual cultural contexts.

As practices in the reality of modern life (the force of globalisation etc.) constantly push for communications and mobilisations in different layers, the “World” as both a conceptual and a transcendental field of being in traditional phenomenology has been in the process of transforming and becoming, both on empirical and conceptual levels. There are “Worlds” (of living experiences, symbolic systems, identities, memories) instead of a “World”, which encounter and intersect with each other. And yet, the World as a transcendental field of being for all human beings still remains as a whole, so that land must be shared and meanings must be exchanged and negotiated through languages. In a way, not only those ones who travel to foreign lands, but each and every human being in this world is involved in the practice and dialogue of transformation and re-conceptualising the World (in a transcendental and ontological sense, the World as a whole), of which the process incorporates realisation of and communication among Worlds (in an ethnocultural specific sense, the Worlds as experienced).

Interculturalism is a model of management of ethnocultural diversity in a society which incorporates individuals or groups that share different cultures and recognitions of identities. According to Bouchard (2010) interculturalism embraces integration, pluralist mindset, and rejection of all discrimination based on difference. This understanding is the theoretical premise of understanding the intercultural issues in this research, however, instead of referring to interculturalism as a concept to deal with diversity within one

society where there is a foundational culture or cultures, I use the term to describe diversity among societies in the bigger picture of a global society where more complex situations and interactions are going on. In actual intercultural activities, however, situations are not always so neat and ideal as the concept suggests.

Among all the complexities in intercultural phenomena and practices, Clammer et al. brought forward the foundational ontological obstacles in intercultural relations:

If ontologies are basic to the construction of culture, then it is reasonable to assume that differing conceptions of being-in-the-world necessarily enter into conflicts between systems (societies or cultures) based on different ontological premises. How one figures one's own world greatly determines how one will relate to other possible and perhaps conflicting configurations that one might encounter.
(Clammer et al., 2004)

To answer the question of ontologies and intercultural relations, theorists have often referred to anthropology of nomadism as well as philosophy of nomadology by Deleuze and Guattari, cited by D'andrea "that refers to a style of critical thinking that seeks to expose and overcome the sedentary logic of state, science and civilisation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980; Braidotti, 1994)." (D'andrea, 2006).

Anthony D'andrea (2006), for example, came up with the term of "Neo-Nomadism" as a further ethnographical derivation and application of Deleuzian philosophy of nomadology, which is a more explicit concept to describe the actual post-national phenomenon and deterritorialising activities that is happening as a socio-cultural pattern of nowadays. By the concept he meant "a device for investigating the cultural effects of hypermobility on self, identity and sociality", so that a connection could be made between anthropology and philosophy to provide a new way of viewing subjectivity and identity in intercultural practices.

Deleuzian ontology of “immanence” and nomadology

Deleuzian philosophy is quite a fascinating deep-sea world of complex relations and enormously huge possibilities to explore. In this research I am not going to dive into the philosophy and try to pick up every treasure shell I can find, instead, I only intend to take a glance through one facet of it which is often referred to in discussions on contemporary intercultural relations. Deleuzian understanding of *difference* has inspired plenty of projects and theoretical innovations in fields of interculturalism and views on ethnocultural diversity.

Immanence is one of the core concepts of Deleuzian philosophy and refers to the singular yet de-essentialised material embodiment of the subject, which is also described in terms of becoming, complexity, dislocation and vital movement (Braidotti, 1996). The structure of Immanence is fundamental to understanding being in the Deleuzian World, which is contrary to the tradition of Western philosophy as a centralised dichotomy, based on the foundation of movement, becoming, and de-essentialisation. The deleuzean body is a space of multiple becomings, potentially contradictory, impersonal and polymorphous (Braidotti, 1996).

Based on the ontology of *Immanence* and other crucial concepts, a nomad is described by Deleuze and Guattari not as an alternative against normality, but as a prominent identity that should replace any fixity and closure of any identities. This conceptualisation of the nomad identity describes the Deleuzian philosophy of nomadology. D’andrea cited

Nomadology thus rethinks identity as: always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, etc. It is a creolized aggregate composed through bricolage’ (Malkki, 1992, p.37). (D’andrea,2006)

I find Deleuzian philosophy very fruitful in viewing cultural and ontological phenomena in this globalised world, for it elaborates the condition as a nomad to a philosophical level and provides alternative understandings of being and subjectivity. It somehow liberates

me from the “burdens” of given and fixed identities, and could potentially offer answers or explanations to my research questions. So I include Deleuzian ontology and nomadology as another theoretical reference of this research.

Methodology

Crystallisation Framework and Interdisciplinary Inquiry

I regard my research as an interdisciplinary inquiry which integrates philosophical questions with ethnographic work and art making. The research questions have emerged from personal experiences in certain cultural contexts, and eventually, through personal reflection, transformed into ontological questions. This fact determines that the research can not be seen as only a culture study or a philosophical inquiry. It is located in, and must be designated to, a multi-genre field of qualitative research. Therefore it calls for a framework which structuralises multiple qualitative inquiry methods in its paradigm. Crystallisation as qualitative research methodology was first brought up by sociologist Laurel Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005 see Ellingson 2009). It referred to breaking boundaries among literary, artistic, and scientific productions in a qualitative research. Ellingson (2009) forged crystallisation as an emergent framework for qualitative research in order to accomplish multi-genre goals for ethnographic and other qualitative work. I adapt her interpretation of crystallisation and use the idea as the basic principle of framing and designing my research.

To research the ontological issue of otherness in culture praxis, there is a necessity to investigate experiences from different disciplinary angles to be able to tackle the social, philosophical, and sensorial complexity interwoven in the phenomenon. In my research I gather and analyse the empirical data through multiple methods and theories:

First of all, the fundamental philosophical issue of being and the o/Other consist perceptions both of reasoning and aesthetics, as phenomenologists stressed the significance of sensing and viewing in the process of building up the perception of space and body and so on. Thus being the Other is an experience or perception which is not constructed by pure reasoning, but also by aesthetics and sensing. Art theorists such as Arnheim also diagnosed visuals as another fundamental system of human perception based on the study of Gestalt psychology. Thus I consider the aesthetic perspective as a significant part of the experience of knowing the o/Other. In order to complete the visual and aesthetic inquiry in the issue of otherness and gain knowledge that would only be

gained through aesthetic process, I apply art-making as part the Crystallisation frame work of the research.

Secondly, the o/Other issue in my research is experienced and embodied in certain social contexts and praxes. It would be ignorant and inadequate to only look into the fundamental ontological issue without taking certain social structures in the narrative into account. To tackle the social and cultural complex ,to able to analyse the phenomenon of the otherness in certain contexts, and to understand how social practices and influence the phenomenon, I apply research approaches of auto-ethnography to document my experiences as a foreigner in Nordic countries and how the o/Other issue speaks to me in the certain social-cultural settings.

The way I specifically crystallise this research contains two main aspects: Multiple methods of data collecting and creating; auto-ethnographical notes, narrative writing, film-making. And Interdisciplinary analysis of data; references from social study, cultural study, and philosophy.

Auto-ethnography and Phenomenology

The phenomenon of the Other acquires its embodiments in practices and symbolic systems to be perceived by human subjects. To know and analyse the concept, we have to start with understanding the phenomenon of the otherness in its cultural appearance. This study has a core interest in theoretical and ontological issues of the Other, however, it is a study of the theoretical question by looking through its appearance or reflection in cultural practices. As I indicated in the introduction chapter, the first goal of this research is *to reveal the phenomenon of paradox positions when experiencing the subject's own otherness in social and cultural situations, and to present the phenomenon to the readers in an engagingly explicit and visual way.*

With the goal of describing and presenting certain personal experiences in certain cultural contexts, I highlight *auto-ethnography* as the first major reference of my methodology. Auto-ethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to

describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experiences (ethno) (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005).

In my research, I apply the ideas and methods of auto-ethnography in data collecting and analysis. I value auto-ethnography for its capacity in dealing with phenomenological questions, for the fundamental ideas of doing auto-ethnography as Ellis et al. (2011) suggested, is to write the experiences of the author to create evocative and specific representations of culture/cultural experience and to give audiences a sense of how being there in the experience feels (Ellis, 2004). This feature of auto-ethnography strongly supports me in approaching my first research goal.

I also refer to auto-ethnography for its understandings about the role of the Self in culture. It is within culture where the *I* can experience and pinpoint the Other. Chang (2016) described culture as 'a web of self and others', which means culture as a group-oriented concept is a product of interactions between self and others in practices within the culture itself. Therefore self is the starting point for cultural acquisition and transmission (Chang, 2016). She also described culture as "superorganic" (2016) based on the idea that a culture is constituted by each individual's interactive activities. This understanding about culture and individuals is coherent with phenomenology's paradigm of first-person experience, introspection and reflection.

I apply auto-ethnographical concepts and methods in my research in an aspect where it shares common ground with the phenomenological importance of first-person experiences and voices. I also adhere to the auto-ethnographic understandings of how culture is constituted and extended by individual relationship between self and others. To understand the "superorganic" whole entity which is called "culture", we have to locate our focus onto the very basic interactions and experiences from an individual point of view. This is an important anthropological idea, but also a philosophical insight, because it creates a bridge between cultural studies and a discussion in a philosophical model of the Self and the Other. We are able to describe and get a grasp of invisible and abstract philosophical questions by collecting data from visible and tangible cultural phenomena.

My body and my cultural background made me considered to be the Other in the Western culture in various contexts. By reviewing my own stories about identity crises and

reactions toward othering in Western society, I want to undertake a discussion on dynamics and conflicts between passively defined identity by the culture and subjectively defined self by the individual herself, to thus open a discussion or critique towards the phenomenon or concept of the Other.

Myself is an ideal subject of investigation in the Other in this research because I'm an active individual who participates in "this" culture but comes from another culture. I have the body which represent "my people's experience in another culture" (Ellis et al., 2004).

Visual methodology: Visual auto-ethnography, Artistic research, and Film Art

Tradition: Film art and humanistic research

The form of art I produce in this artistic research is film art. Film as a media technique and as an art form has quite a history as a collaborative part to academic researches. Among other fields of study, film art is rather closely connected to anthropology and psychoanalysis throughout history.

The relation between film and psychoanalysis can date back to the Surrealist movement of the 1920s and 1930s. According to Creed (1998) In their quest for new modes of experience that transgressed the boundaries between dream and reality, the Surrealists extolled the potential of the cinema. Although it was common for psychoanalysis theories to provide resources and leaving a strong impact on film theories and film making, film in return contributed and influenced psychoanalysis as well. One example is that film provides materials for psychoanalytical visual culture criticism writing, another is that film is used as an art form or visual tactic to demonstrate theories such as feminism to create a broader impact on the certain social and cultural issues.

However, researchers and film makers have been working on exploring and expanding film as an art medium in tackling theses of contemporary lives more and more. One

example that inspired this research a lot is the Vietnamese writer/film maker Trihn. T Mihn-ha, who uses film as a language and also a way of seeing and tackling the issues of history, country, politics, identity, genders, etc. Her works show that film can be a powerful way to dig into fields like experiences, affections, memories; especially in combination with writing.

In this research I used film as a method in two different ways: firstly, in an ethnographical sense, I made a short film as auto-ethnographical data; secondly, and defining this research as an artistic research, an expressive art work as a reflection on the sensorial and phenomenological aspects of the experiences of being among, as well as being, the Other.

Visual auto-ethnography

Doing ethnography is not a process that only involves distant observations and documentations. The ethnographer has to always be there, to understand others as well as herself among others. So the process of inquiry is not only about learning but also about experiencing. The experience of being in a culture, to understand and make sense of it, is not a process of pure reasoning. It is a practice of seeing that involves ideas, emotions, sensory responses, and the pictures of our imagination (MacDougall, 2006).

Image-making can help an ethnographer record experiences and her knowing of the culture in a way so that multiple aspects are preserved and reflected. Film-making compared to photography, which is capturing of moments, allows the author to reflect her relation to the subject in successive scenes which can create layers of meanings and reflect a more complex structure of the author's view on the subject. In this research I used film-making as a method of documenting and telling the third story of my empirical data.

I made a short auto-ethnographical film about my daily routines and interactions with people in my life circle around Telefonplan in two different ways: firstly, I just held the camera to document the world around me, subjects being filmed are people,

surroundings, and interactions. Secondly, I set up a camera on a tripod, or in another person's hands, and filmed myself as the subject of all my daily routines and interactions, I became the main actor and director of the documentation.

In the film making process I was the one who set up cameras, framed pictures, cut the film, and I was also the subject being filmed. To document the anthropological data of life of an international student living in Telefonplan was only the secondary goal of the practice of visual auto-ethnographical data creating. The main reason that motivated me to do this visual reflection was the attempt to observe my own observation and interpretation of myself as a being in a foreign country.

By filming, I got the material of observing me as subject of making interpretation of her own relations to the culture. I used the structure of filming to reflect three different layers of my relations to culture: first one is as the distant observer of the environment and space, and people in the environment; the second is the observed subject as an example of a certain ethnocultural condition of being; the third one is as an author who interprets the observed subject with her practice seeing through camera.

Interestingly, when viewing the captured images, I gained another viewpoint of seeing my experience in Telefonplan, that is the observer of observers. The new viewing point inspired me to show the filmed materials in an artistic form that can be guaranteed by the language of filming: I connected the different clips, filmed in different perspectives, into a complete film by adding a dramatically designed transition scene in between the perspectives. By adding the artistic design, the film gained another layer of meanings for analysing my condition of being in another country.

Artistic research through film making

Julian Klein (2010) referred to Dombois' (2009) description of artistic research: "Research about/for/through Art | Art about/for/through Research."

This research is, as I mentioned before, an interdisciplinary inquiry with a crystallised frame work of methodologies, a crystal that shows different pictures being viewed from different angles.

The Other is not only a word or concept created in languages, the Other has its visible and tangible embodiment that takes place in individuals' bodily experiences through interactions with the world. To know or to perceive the Other in one's subjectivity is to a large extent a process of sensory and aesthetic; for phenomenology maintained that one's experience is partially constituted of perceptions of space and composition. As human experience the Lifeworld with the intentionality of minds which is to a large extent about aesthetical perceptions of space, colour, and shape, we realise the existence of the Other and its embodiments in space through sensory and feeling as well as through reasoning and language. To convey the knowledge of sensory, to tackle the aesthetical aspect in process of encountering the o/Other, art is an efficient tool of inquiry.

"To see is to think": Cognition through art

The core value of artistic approach in this study that I find incredibly significant is the special cognition structure of art. In his article 'Artistic Cognition and Creativity', Sullivan (2011) maintained the important role of art as a way of inquiry and knowledge producing for its significance in cognition and creativity. He came up with his own definition of visual cognition referring to the classic theory of visual perception by art theorist Rudolf Arnheim.

In *Visual Perception* (1974) Rudolf Arnheim stressed the significance of art and visuals as an intuitive creating cognition system which differs from a verbal-based reasoning system, which is as important as verbal knowledge and cognition when it comes to the subject of human. And as Sullivan mentioned, "perception did not merely provide data picked up by the senses; it also played an active role in concept formation." (Sullivan, 2011). Thus he gave his own definition of visual cognition:

Visual cognition is both a biological and cultural construct where mindful practices are structured, framed, and embodied. These cognitive practices take place within, across,

between, and around the artists, artworks, viewers and settings. Visual cognition creates ideas and insights that connect 'within' and 'across' individual dispositions and experiences, and produces cultural capital that questions existing knowledge systems and structures 'between' and 'around' disciplinary boundaries and cultural contexts. This understanding is fundamental to the application of artistic approach in the research.

This research is focusing on individual experiences in cultures, and the experiences are constituted of complexities in understanding culture and the World in many layers. The experience is multifaceted, embodied, entangled with cognitive process in different structures of knowing.

I value art practice in my inquiry process for its significance in capacity of conveying sensorial and intuitive knowledge. My cognition system functions in a way which is both rational and sensorial when trying to understanding the Other issue. Imagination, subconscious, and affection are equally important in the inquiry process as reasoning and writing. The art project as an appendix in the research frame work plays an essential role of catching and understanding the sensorial, subtle, affective aspects of the issue, especially since my research topic is a humanistic question that to a large extent is rooted in experience and sensory.

In this research I engage an art project as a reflection of the empirical data presented in the second story, for I believe that art can help to bring meanings and understandings of the experience, as well as offer another angle of understanding, which produces knowledge that can be created through the system of visual cognition. I believe that through art-making I am able to present the issue in multiple layers that will make sense beyond the "boundaries" of disciplines and cultures, to make people understand (or experience) the ontological situations through a multi-dimensional cognitive process.

Providing data of emotional, abstract, and other subtle aspects of individual experience

In ethnographical or anthropological researches, art, especially visual art, is commonly applied to document field data or applied as the form of presenting the research outcome (such as crafts and documentary films). In this research I applied visual ethnography in the third story in this sense.

But by referring to artistic research in this research, I do not mean the visual auto-ethnography piece that made up the third story of empirical data. Instead I am referring to an art work inspired and made through the analytical process of the second story. Through art-making I do not intend to document or reproduce the actual scenarios or situations that happened, but to reflect the feelings, impressions, and emotional experiences of mine going through certain situations. I believe in this way art can help to record or reflect those more subtle, phenomenological, or even psycho-analytical data in order to help me understand what is really happening on my ontological level in embracing being as the Other, or among the Other.

Phenomenology is a discipline of study that learns about the World and ourselves through knowing how it appears to our own structure of experiencing, perceiving, and knowing. Instead of tackling the issue of the Other in a symbolic way from a distant and observational angle, I believe it is more important to reflect on personal experiences of real conditions of being, from a phenomenological perspective. A personal reflection of a certain experience is not necessarily enough to tell the "objective truth" of how human beings embrace their being in general, but it can provide lively examples and tangible data which is important to studies of today and the future. I apply art in this research not only as media or a form of communication, but as a discipline that contains its own "logic" and unique significance in knowledge making.

I find art very powerful in carrying and recording subjective human experiences (as well as carrying symbolic and discursive meanings on a social level, but that is not the angle I am focusing on in this research), especially in emotional, affective, phenomenological¹ aspects. As Borgdorff suggested:

¹I was about to use "psychological" here, but since phenomenology has the tradition of questioning "psychologism" and psychology in terms of the human cognitive and mental functions, I change the term to 'phenomenological' instead.

Embedded in artistic and academic contexts, artistic research seek to convey and communicate content that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic products. (Borgdorff, 2011)

The art I create in this research is thus an expressive art work rather than documentative. I hope to reflect emotional, phenomenological subjective feelings in experiences instead of documenting an event or a fact. I think art is a powerful agent of translating and conveying emotions, affections, aesthetic experiences, from which we can see examples of a subject experiencing the Other from a first-person mentality.

Transcendent the physical body, and the pursue of freedom through art

When engaging artistic research method in the inquiry into ontology, Jan Jagodzinski (2005) offers me inspirations in his discussion of transcending the physical body into the Deleuzian “Body without Organs (BwO)” through music.

BwO is a term Deleuze and Guattari (2016) used to describe the being as consistency, assemblage, relations, instead of something limited within the boundaries of physical bodies, ‘the field of immanence of desire, the place of consistency proper to desire’ (Jagodzinski 2005b, 19). In comparison to the Euro-centric cultural fixity in narratives of body, especially of female and oriental bodies, the ontology of BwO is a more liberating lens to view issues of identity, otherness, and being in the globalised world. Doing art in this research is also a way for me to integrate my experiences, feelings, thought, to recognise my own freedom which is beyond structural fixation and politics of the Other.

Making a film for me is to create a space through images, sequences, the audios, and in that space I share feelings and aesthetical experiences of my being with myself and the audience. Art-producing offers me another way to merge and integrate myself into the World, as a free agent where feelings happen and pass. By doing art and creating the space of my own life experiences and emotions, I am also able to have a dialogue with all the memories, affections, or even subconsciousness of my own, thus I recognise myself as a unique and active subject or agent of making connections and meanings for the World, I recognise the freedom within me which could be oppressed or denied by social relations and constructions.

My role as the researcher and the artist

Oftentimes, artistic research is considered to be performed by artists (if not, then researchers in similar fields who have the experiences and skills of doing art), while the focus of discussion of the methodology is usually centred on interdisciplinary issues. In this research, I do not intend to make an articulation between those, or choose either a researcher or an artist as my role. I understand my role as positioned in an intersectional field of art and academia. My reasoning of such a role incorporates two basic aspects:

1. The idea of breaking boundaries between paradigms of art and science (in a broader sense, like the German term *Wissenschaft*) is embraced in the "nature" of artistic research itself. To not make a narrative of "either or" is an attempt to honour the "spirit" of the methodology of artistic research.
2. Personally, as a junior student-researcher in the field of visual culture, I am still open in terms of my future paths in academia, or in art. I hope to develop skills in both academic and artistic creation. I do not see the necessity at this stage of my studies, research, and life, to designate myself a role choosing between a researcher or an artist. I can be a researcher who researches through art, as well as an artist who seeks further, interdisciplinary understandings of art in cognition and knowledge producing.

Stories

This chapter shows data from my auto-ethnographical studies of being the Other, trying to reveal and show the process of witnessing my being and my own otherness. The process of seeing and perceiving my otherness is in three stages:

1. Learning the knowledge about my fixed position of being the Other in cultural discourses, from institutions and interactive communications. Knowing about my "being-for-others".
2. "Feeling" or "sensing" the otherness through sensorial and affective perception processes, from embodied experiences in certain spaces and situations with visuals and other aesthetic influences. I sense the differences of my body, I realise my appearance is something different to the Other. I'm the Other to them.
3. Pondering the conflicting senses of being the Other and being the Self in my own conscious mind. Present the juxtapositions to myself and the readers for making further inquiries. Ponder the coexistence with the Other and new possible way to understanding being of me and being of the Other.

The data is constituted of three autobiographical stories and an analysis after each. The three stories depict the three stages mentioned above. The first two stories are in the form of creative writing, the third is a short video.

Story One: a narrative of "China"

2017, During the exchange study in Stockholm I went to an open lecture at Stockholm University. It was about Hong Kong literature. The topic was fun and the lecture was interesting except the fact that I had some difficulties understanding the German presenter's mandarin.

Things went bizarre when the host from Stockholm University tried to summarise the lecture and make some clear and strong points at the end of the lecture. She claimed that due to the civil war and the revolutions during the modernisation and the turn to

communism in mainland China, the real cultural "Chineseness" was transferred to peripheries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, or even other south east Asian countries, but that the mainland China no longer has its cultural properties and the authority of real "Chineseness". "PRC" is, according to her, the more proper name for modern China nowadays.

As I recall, "PRC" is a discriminative word targeting China and Chinese people in areas such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, or some other South Eastern Asian countries which have a cultural and historical complexity of race and internationality. I don't consider "PRC" a culturally proper or politically correct word to use at all, especially in a circumstance like this. There could be a possibility that the teacher was not aware of the discriminative context of the word "PRC", however, if so, the authenticity of her professional title in the field of East Asian studies should be questioned.

I didn't really know how to feel about such claim. I almost laughed as it seemed like some bad humour, but after I realised that she was actually serious, I just became speechless. I guess I was frustrated and angry. Like my whole life education and my whole culture identities were denied by some stranger who could not even speak mandarin fluently. And yet that stranger is from an established academic institution and bears a high academic title. She gave this speech not during a private *fika* to antagonise me personally, but on a public academic event, an open lecture with the goal of spreading proper "knowledge".

Not to say the strong discrimination and impertinently biased confidence (or pure ignorance) in using the term "PRC" which contains way too much excessive political interest for a context of discussing literature, it seemed that a recognised western expert in humanism studies even failed to learn the common sense that political nationality and cultural ethnicity are two different concepts from the Western disciplines. Oh, no, she was just using double standards. If it was true for her that the peripheries have the true "cultural Chineseness" even without nationality and geographic location, then how could she not understand that China as a land and culture, created by people living there, is a different concept from "PRC"?

I then raised my hand and introduced myself as a person from the "PRC", and I made my point that although there are strong debates about modern politics in China, it was very ignorant to say that mainland China doesn't have cultural "Chineseness". "Chineseness" might be embraced and transformed in different ways in everyday practices of different times, but it is not OK to deny the cultural identities of people in that land just because they are from the so called "PRC".

Then the whole lecture hall replied with few seconds of embarrassing silence combined with stiff and exaggerated smiles on both scholars' faces. No one said anything as a comment or reaction to my feedback, everyone sitting there seemed like they wished this embarrassing moment would pass as soon as possible. Thankfully, after few seconds of century-long gaze-to-gaze silent communication the professor finally carried on with other topics.

There was no dialogue that I was expecting. I thought by making my point I could at least initiate a very brief discussion about the complexity between cultural identity and political force from national organisations. But there was nothing but embarrassment. It was quite a "mind-blowing" moment for me to process what happened during the open lecture, especially when I put this experience in juxtaposition with a New Year day experience months before.

There was a Chinese New Year celebration event at Östasiatiska Museet, another important culture institution in Sweden, to which the ambassador of the exactly the "PRC" was invited to give a speech at the opening ceremony. The wasted boring speech and the ceremony actually did remind me of some very typical unpleasant "PRC" specific experiences. From the beginning of primary school to the end of high school, it was a common experience to stand in formation on a square during the opening of some events or just during the weekly routine of the flag raising ceremony, listening to some "important" people's (usually school leaders or other powerful people within educational institutions) long and boring speeches. Supervised by the teacher, so that any unwanted movements or talks would be noticed and warned of. Not even once in my life did I enjoy ceremonies like this. Never did I feel comfortable standing in formation, monitored by

teachers, forced to listen to speeches I had no interest in just to avoid the punishments of breaking the rules.

Ridiculously enough I re-experienced the worst kind of “PRC” ceremony in Sweden. Sure, there were no teachers supervising, or no punishments for escaping, but the way the ambassador presented himself and the very specific language style used for the speech was close enough to those unpleasant school principles and institution heads.

To make the experience worse they also arranged some Eastern Asian looking people there to sell ugly and unauthentic names in Chinese handwriting to the audience. However, it was still a celebrated event to embrace Chinese culture and tradition in Sweden, with collaboration between a serious Swedish culture institution and the official embassy of the People’s Republic of China.

How ironic. Not only can the very same China be fantasied about, imagined, and pursued as Voltaire and Leibniz's China for one day, and even officially collaborated with, but still be dwarfed into the culture-less "PRC" the next day. But also the denial and the interest of one culture could so easily co-exist in a “harmony” of unpleasantness and irritation.

Reflection and analysis:

Part I: Desire towards the Other and recognition of freedom

The declaration given by the professor in Stockholm University that "mainland China doesn't have Chineseness" reminds me of a similar declaration in the 70s from erudite British historian and Professor at Oxford, Hugh Trevor Roper, that African history did not exist. Chinua Achebe (1987) commented on this pronouncement by pointing out that "If there is something in these utterances more than youthful inexperience, more than a lack of factual knowledge, what is it? Quite simply it is the desire - one might indeed say the need - in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest."

Of course the manifest of China and Africa differs from each other in many ways in a Western-centric discourse, however the structures of desire remain in homogeneity. Other cultures take a role of the Other in a narrative where the greatness of the narrator culture is to be manifested. Levinas (1979) particularly maintained that this desire for the *elsewhere* and the *other* could be a fundamental pursuit of being. The Other created in the narrative is for the Subject's desire to be, the desired Other is the Subject's desire to be.

This kind of over-simplified dismissive comment about other cultures shows a desire towards the Other that is demonstrated by dwarfing and objectification. This is a model of Othering that Sartre has discussed:

It can happen therefore that due to the very impossibility of my identifying myself with the Other's consciousness though the intermediacy of my object-ness for him, I am led to turn deliberately toward the Other and look at him. In this case to look at the Other's look is to posit oneself in one's own freedom and to attempt on the ground of this freedom to confront the Other's freedom [...] At this instant the Other becomes a being which I possess and which recognises my freedom.

(Sartre, 2003)

He called this attitude "indifference, desire, hate, sadism". It happens when facing the two freedoms of "I" and the Other, "I" deliberately deny the Other's in order to avoid the internal conflicts and impossibility of perceiving my own freedom as being-in-itself.

This desire is a result of the endless "competition" between the self and the other about who can be the active constituting Subject and who belongs to the transcendent world of Object. In the model of phenomenological ontology, this competition is inevitable, either the Other becomes a "mirror" that shows my freedom or vice versa. In the story, the Swedish professor chose to objectify the Other culture to recognise her or her culture's freedom.

It is through the Other's desire that I feel my own otherness. Not that I other myself by acknowledging and imitating the Other's constitution of the world, but I am able to emphasise with the Other during a face to face communication, therefore I recognised

myself as the desired Other to him. The Other instead recognise his/her freedom in understanding me as a being-for-the Other.

Karen H. Naifeh wrote:

By the nineteenth century the German philosopher Hegel, in his Phenomenology of Spirit (1807/1977), wrote of the dialectic of the master and the slave, essentially claiming that although one needs the recognition of the other for consciousness of self to exist, one must dominate the other to avoid the threat of being annihilated by the other. (Naifeh, 2019)

Part II: Doubled Burdens: Confusions and discomfort from both cultures

From my memory and experiences, it was not easy to be a citizen of the People's Republic of China. Despite all the political complexity, as most people living on Chinese land, my love towards the "country" is strong and genuine. By "country" in this context I mean the land, the beautiful language that made it possible for me to read texts from thousands of years ago, and the people with whom I share emotions and memories; a collective bound together by history, language, affection and memory; rather than a national ideology and political force.

In China there has always been an attempt and a force in propaganda, to blur and mix the concept of the ethnocultural "country" and the politically enforced ideological country as the People's Republic of China. In textbooks we were taught that to love the party is to love the country; we were taught to believe that a certain level of autocracy is good for everyone. Even today I am not able to judge whether those claims are correct or not. However, luckily enough, I started to read, and to question the history, culture, and ideology of the China I was living in, quite early in my life. That was partly because of my family education and partly because of the difficulties and the discomfort I encountered in being a citizen of the People's Republic of China.

The memory of school ceremonies in the story was just one example out of thousands of moments of discomfort I have experienced throughout my childhood and teenage life. In

retrospect I can see now that my parents, my mom especially, have embraced ideas of liberty and feminism in my education without even noticing nor conceptualising it themselves. I was understood by my family when having confusions and conflicts with school system and teachers, encouraged to keep my own opinions or even carry out small acts of rebellion as long as it didn't affect "my own benefits". Although criticised and commented as being "weird" by some for not being enthusiastic in "collective honour" and for neglecting school rules such as "do not talk in the hallway", I also met a lot of people who respected me, appreciated me, helped me, including teachers. I found it very difficult to see them and myself simply as people from "PRC", because I have seen them as loving, creative human beings who live on the land and tolerate the politics for nothing but love of the ethnocultural China and its people. I do not think it was fair at all to deny people's cultural identity and the World they are actively constituting based on nothing but the political climate of the nation.

The political climate has made life in China complex for people to cope with. A lot people, myself included, had a strong curiosity of knowledge and of the World outside of the "wall". However, actually being in the outside World is not at all as romantic as I had imagined. Instead of recognising my own freedom by going far away, as a lot Western literature classics fantasied about, in a Western society I found myself more often to exist in others' eyes as the Other from which they can recognise their freedom. The usage of the term "PRC", for example, is one tactic to deny my freedom as an equal active subject, not to mention the more complex gender-racial stereotypes entangled with it.

So I find myself in quite an awkward position in this World: I am the Object of two kinds of Sadism by different systems of culture. In China I was taught to deny my personal freedom to some extent in order to be a good citizen of the autocratic nation, while in the Western world I have to carry the burdens of subtle discrimination towards "PRC" people as the ideological Other who are considered to have very limited understanding of freedom and creativity. My ethnocultural identity that I embraced within my subjectivity is overly polluted by political burdens, the burdens are from both the politics of the homeland and the politics of a Western-centric World.

With these burdens I feel the need for reclaiming the autonomy of my being and my freedom as a human through my own constitution of my identity and the World.

Part III: Who is the Other: Culture as a "superego", a unified sense of Subject as experienced

In phenomenology we basically understand that every individual human mind is her own constituting agent when she is perceiving the Lifeworld. In the story the first problem is that there are two or several different ways of constituting and making meaning. They encounter each other in social circumstances and reveal the dynamic tension between different constitutions and perceptions by different subjects.

The way I understand Chinese culture did not correspond with the others'. Firstly it appeared in the representations of Chinese culture during the museum activity, I questioned the authenticity and genuineness of the performances and hand writing business, although I'm not sure how to distribute the criticism on the two collaborating institutions. However, my opinion does not suggest that I would agree to the claim made by the university teacher in the second situation, because I do not agree that only the political situation of mainland China should be enough to define or defy the whole diversity of a culture and so called "Chineseness".

The interesting thing here is that the museum, the university lecture, and I basically hold three different attitudes and understandings about Chinese culture, and yet no one agreed with others. But from my perspective, with two institutionalised discourses about Chinese culture both disturbing but in different ways, I feel very bothered and get a strong sense of my otherness in me being in the foreign land. By *sense of otherness* I mean that I sense that I exist in some other subject's constitution of the world; I am the Other or the Object of desire to her, and her subjective constitution is so strong that my own constitution of the world is withdrawn and defied by hers.

The encounter of different constitutions does not create discomfort or any strong frustrating sense of otherness automatically, as long as there is always an on-going

dialogue and the will of communication from each party, as Levinas (1979) suggested that a real communication is always an ethical way towards the Other. But what frustrated me is that the constitution of my homeland from the Other's subjectivity was through an institutionalised voice, and an institutionalised voice is not always willing to open a conversation with individuals who are from outside.

In the case of the open lecture, the professor made her personal judgement about "Chineseness" through an institutionalised structure, that is on a public open lecture, and that institutional structure of the speech has its own significance in symbolics, it is a symbol of collective institutional power. The power structure between me and the institution is entangled with the different constitutions of perceptions about a same subject, therefore created complexity. At least it created complexity for me when I had to understand and process the Other's opinion about my mother culture in my own experiences. The institutional voice made me feel vulnerable and weak in countering a different discourse with my own.

Institution is a subject discussed a lot in social science and political researches, as well as the interactions between institutions and individuals. As Patricia H. Thomson(2012) suggested, "A key principle of the institution logics perspective is that each of the institutional orders in society has both material and symbolic elements." And institutions are "directly shaped by culture and social structure, including networks of social relationships as well as structures of power, status, and domination." As a social network, an institution is a symbol of a collective mind as well as a symbol of cultural, political, or economical authority in a certain community. The symbolic and practical power of an institution creates an uneven power structure in the dialogue with individuals.

With the structure of institutions, my experiences were experienced beyond a personal level. With the encounters with institutionalised speeches and interactions, I actually confronted the society or culture instead of individual people. Theories of structural racism may see this as an example of an institutionalist perspective, that the dominant race institutionalises its dominance at all levels in a society (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Because of the structure and symbolic meaning of collective mindset in institutions, I experienced the culture or the collective subjectivity as the Other.

From an ontological perspective, a collective sense of Subject is from the co-existence attitude towards the Other. According to Satre (2003) that sense of co-existence is to expand “I” into “we”, thus the Other is transformed into a plural of I so she stops being the Other anymore, instead someone else outside the “border” becomes the new Other. However, who do people include as “we”, and where to draw the “boundaries” of the group that shares the collective subjectivity of “we”, is the subject of ethnographical and anthropological studies. In Interculturalistic studies, as a historical and cultural result, one culture can be described as *foundational* (Bouchard, 2010) among others in a society. The Foundational culture is defined by Bouchard as:

a community that has occupied a single area for a long period (one century, several centuries, or several millennia); that has formed a territory or settlement (what certain geographers call “territoriality”) with which it identifies; that has developed an identity and a collective imagination expressed through language, traditions, and institutions; that has developed solidarity and belonging; and that shares a sense of continuity based in memory. (Bouchard ,2010).

So in comparison, the Swedish culture is without doubt the foundational culture in Sweden. Within the culture there is a collective identity and imagination that I do not share. That cultural segregation itself can already make me sense the major collective subjectivity of another culture which I am not included in, with the negative comment and representation of the culture which I share identity with carried out through institutional voices of Swedish society, I experienced a rather strong discomfort of being the Other. Thus I experienced the Swedish culture as seeing me as the Other, just as a result of the structure of narrative and experience itself, not even to a moral or ethical level.

Since they are the “we” without me, the Other for me becomes “they” instead of he or she. That is another intriguing phenomenon in the experience, it is how phenomenon of and attitude towards the Other, which are basically metaphysical relations and ontological issues on an individual level in phenomenology, also implied to a level of culture and collective consciousness. However, the collective identity and imagination is a constantly

on-going process of negotiation. Instead of a matter of materiality, the Other as “they” is rather a matter of perception and symbolic constructions.

Alfred Schutz (1972) referred to Dilthey's term 'objective mind (objektiver Geist)' in his book *The phenomenology of the Social World*, which means the totality of the cultural medium considered as having its own inner form and structure. Although the idea of 'objective mind' is criticised for its lack of credibility in the individual and participational perspective from a phenomenological understanding about the ontology of the society, I would argue that, however, as a foreigner experiencing another culture, the phenomena of the other culture may appear to me in a form that resembles 'objective mind'. That is to say, from my observational point as a cultural outsider, the foundational culture in an epistemological perspective appeared to my intentionality as a whole which seems to have an objectivity, despite the culture itself being an organic web of relations and experiences seen from within. The observing angle as the Other and the lack of collective imagination of the other culture I live in presented a façade of it that I can see but find it difficult to climb over.

However, the issue of façade can also be discussed vice versa. That is how a foreign identity was negotiated and marked by the people on the other side of the façade and within the "boundary".

'Intersectionality' is a concept created to understand and describe the structural discrimination and inequality related to gender and race in the Western society and globally, seen from different fields and institutions of social praxis. Through the lenses of Intersectional theories I could see that the way I feel about the other culture as a whole is not totally delusional and contributed to my position as an outside viewer. I did receive negative feedbacks about my cultural and national identity from institutions of the other culture, and that could be seen as an outcome of structural problems of constructions of the Other.

The two-way miscommunication contributed to my life experience that the 'Swedish culture' appeared like the Other to me as a whole, as a big collective consciousness and Subject, to which I am also the Other, even seen with traits of Sadism and negative

prejudice. In this structure of othering there is not much left for the personal and empirical level, for example the prejudice that I experienced is rather towards the culture behind me instead of me as a person. In this structure of othering I am (as well as all Chinese people) merely just a symbol of the imagined Other instead of a real human. However the poisonous attribute of this kind of structure of othering is, when it works on a imaginative and symbolic level to construction prejudice of the Other to be able to recognise the freedom and superiority of the Subject as an imagined collective, it is real people who are facing and experiencing the consequences of prejudice, such as emotional traumas, or even structural discrimination. The imagined collectives, either as the Subject or the Other, do not even have the body nor mind that can embrace freedom or emotional trauma as real human subjects.

The big Other constructed on a collective and symbolic level is nothing but a delusional desire machine that penetrates troubles and pain into the World and into the lives of individuals.

Story Two: Being Among Finns

During the second year of my studies, I had to accomplish two language courses for the mandatory master level requirements. I enrolled in two Swedish courses, one was post-beginner level and the other was intermediate-advanced level. In the first one there was basically a group of international students, while the other was purely constituted of Finnish students who were about to take the Swedish national test. I ended up being the only foreign person in the class, not to mention being the only "ethnic" one.

How do I describe the feeling when I really was in a space entirely encompassed by Finns? It was quite an "Alice in Wonderland" kind of experience because that was the first time in my life when I was exposed to a pure white group and had to interact with the other people. The experience was new and it was like an expedition into the field of the unknown.

Actually everything was fine. The teacher and the classmates were nice and easy to work with, and all group works went smoothly. However, I still experienced more pressure during the course than any other courses I took; and the pressure was definitely not only about the study content. The pressure was not necessarily negative, but there was something that was stirred up in me and "bothered" me.

That something was very hard to grasp, even though I have been learning the vocabulary of culture and humanism studies, I couldn't put a word on it; I couldn't name it. The weirdness was rather from within, an internal thrill. Every time I entered the classroom, I saw a forest of golden hair and a sea of blue eyes, the thrill always came at that point. The thrill was not fear, it was a shock, a speechless moment, over loaded with complex affections.

If I were Roland Barthes looking at a picture, I would describe the affection of the moment as "*punctum*". The *punctum* touched me and thrilled me. It was beautiful but with a silent enormous body that could potentially crush you.

In the *punctum* it was me, myself, the element that pricks the *studium* like an accident. I punctuate the constancy of a classical picture of a Finnish classroom by being there with my totally different body.

I stood in the golden forest like a black monument stone from another time and space.

I couldn't mingle, and I knew that every one knew, that I was different.

Or was I the prick? Maybe I should reverse the narrative.

Maybe I was just the first explorer in the unknown world, like the first European sailor who ever stepped onto the land of America and became exposed to the blank moment of thrill when his eyes met a batch of different faces for the first time ever. I felt his fear and his eagerness of reversing his position as the odd one to new land. The locals were scary to him because they made him realise that he was so alone and different, he was vulnerable. He was also fascinated, but he wanted to made the locals the odd ones.

I looked around and I sought, but I saw no one alike me, I saw nothing familiar. However, looking at those white faces around me and repeatedly interacting with them did not reinforce the impression of Finnish features on me, on the contrary, it watered down the existence of "Finnishness" to my sensations eventually. But it was my own image of difference that was reinforced eventually.

I looked around, I looked through a group of faces with identical features of northern Europeans, I saw nothing alike me but I saw the image of myself clearer and stronger than ever. The presence of the group of Finns formed a 360 degrees sealed mirror that encompassed me, I was standing in the middle oddly only seeing the piercing reflection of my own different image. I had nowhere to escape.

In the clearest mirror you don't see a duplication of your own image, you see the endless others.

It was not among Chinese people I realised my hair and eyes were dark as silence that dwells in long deep nights. It was among Finns, among those shimmering gold waves and aquamarine eyes that I saw it.

It was among Finns that I saw myself.

Reflection and Analysis:

Part I: the film

See appendix: *The Difficulty of Being*

Part II: The Other as mental/psychological experience

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012) Merleau-Ponty pointed out that the manner that our perceptions reach object, is named "gaze", a practice of looking. Here I argue that the phenomenon of viewing my otherness with me was an affective process through the action of looking when being in a certain space constituted by Others. And the affective process where we "read 'I' through 'Thou'" (Merleau-Ponty 2012) could be a process full of complex emotions or even thrill of losing identity.

Here I want to pose a documentation of Jung's dream which expressed similar thrill or fear of losing identity and subjectivity to the Other through a sensorial experience in juxtaposition to my own experience, this is cited by Karen H. Naihef:

An American Negro. In the dream he was holding a tremendous, red-hot curling iron to my head, intending to make my hair kinky; that is, to give me Negro hair. I could already feel the painful heat, and awoke with a sense of terror. I took this dream as a warning from the unconscious; it was saying that the primitive was a danger to me [...] The only thing I could conclude from this was that my European personality must under all circumstances be preserved intact. [...] The trip [to Africa] revealed itself as less an investigation of primitive psychology [...] than a

probing into the rather embarrassing question: What is going to happen to Jung the psychologist in the wilds of Africa? This was a question I had constantly sought to evade [...] It became clear to me that this study had been not so much an objective scientific project as an intensely personal one, and that any attempt to go deeper into it touched every possible sore spot in my own psychology. (1961, 272). (Naihef, 2019).

The culture backgrounds and power structures in the two experiences are totally different and the affections reflected by the subjects are also not totally the same. In a Eurocentric narrative I would be more like the "Negro" in Jung's narrative, which is the threatening Other who is to be denied but at the same time structurally defines the superiority of the European identity. However, even as the Other in a Eurocentric narrative which I am aware of, I as the subject, can still relate to Jung's unconscious discomfort from the subjective position to a certain extent, although my discomfort was not in the form of discrimination or embarrassment. What I can relate to was the vivid empirical description of the scenario of being in the wilds of Africa alone as a European psychologist, the sense of terror, the thrilling interaction with the Other (not necessarily the bad kind).

I think this juxtaposition shows that a similar kind of thrill of being in the land of the Other could potentially be experienced by subjects regardless of difference in cultural backgrounds and identities. My experience and Jung's experience are different expressions of a similar affective phenomenon from different standing points and cultural backgrounds. Compared to Jung's fear that was expressed as racial and cultural discrimination towards the Other, my "fear" was more expressed as a sudden realisation of the Self.

I think the essential point in this kind of experience is the whole environmental setting and immersible sensorial experience of the space and land of the Other. My experience happened in a Finnish classroom where I was the only foreigner, while Jung's experience was in an alternative reality setting, which was a dream decorated as the wilds of Africa. That is to say, this kind of experience to a large extent talks to our senses and emotions rather than reasons. So in order to better analyse the experience I create an art video to understand and represent the feelings and emotions of being a lonely wanderer in the

Other land, for art has the capacity of conveying subtle and intuitive knowledges that could not be conveyed otherwise.

Story Three: The visions of Telefonplan (The one who is the viewer, the one who is to be viewed)

See appendix for the video: *The Visions of Telefonplan*

Reflections and analysis:

Dramatisation and multiple models of being

This is a school project of visual ethnography practice. I made the video clips that documented fragments of my own life in Telefonplan, Stockholm, as an experiment of auto-ethnography in visual form. However, I deliberately assigned a special structure to the video: I filmed the same daily activities from two different perspectives, from one I was the distant object to be viewed by the camera, while from the other I wore the camera and filmed the visions I saw from my first-person perspective, then I cut the clips from the two perspectives together by adding a dramatically performed transitional clip. By assigning the structure to the raw materials, I wanted to reflect the dual perspectives of viewing and experiencing I gained by living a nomad life in another culture.

Doing this documentary video narrative, I referred to the Deleuzian idea of "dramatisation", which according to Daniel W. Smith (2011) Deleuze called a method that actions and propositions are interpreted as so many sets of symptoms that express or "dramatise" the mode of existence of the speaker. In my case the dramatisation I want to show is not only one set of symptoms of existence, but the juxtaposition of two different sets or modes of existence. Surely we all sometimes in life experience different positions and modes of being, like we are all the viewers and at the same time the one being viewed by others. However, coming from the East to the West as an adult while doing in-depth culture studies in the West, posed a dramatic structure to me where we can observe the phenomenon of shifting modes of being or perspectives of experience.

Who is the viewer, who is to be seen? I want to stress this question given by two different perspectives of experiencing experienced by one subject, created by the life of a nomad or being in another culture. Learning the western culture and living in the West gave me a

perspective that sees my own culture as the Other, while I have the subjective perspective of "the Other" and even am "the Other" myself from that perspective. In this visual narrative the visibility of the comparative juxtapositions are dramatically enhanced. And by doing this I want to propose this very essential question of the research: how should the experiences of shifting perspectives while dealing with drastic changes of living and studying settings be comprehended by oneself from an ontological perspective?

This is to me a phenomenological question. However, while offering fruitful ideas of the o/ Other, both from ontological and metaphysical perspectives, classic phenomenology dealt little with the shifting of subjective perspectives of experiencing. Especially when it comes to the contemporary modes of nomadism, of which in many cases mobility is out of free choice instead of a passive action towards certain unwanted situations.

The shifting or co-existence of different perspectives of experiencing, or the drastic change of modes of being, brought up a thesis Nietzsche once talked about. According to Thomas Sutherland (2014), Nietzsche calls for a "becoming" of the individual premised upon "experimentation, the continuation of values in a fluid state, scrutiny, selection, and criticism of values in infinitum"—in short, a rejection of any politics of identity; any presumption of a static essence that underpins an individual. And this idea was then developed by Deleuze and Guattari as a notion of "nomadism" and on an ontological level, the "body without organs" (Sutherland 2014).

This concept of nomad and becoming seems to be a good explanation of my being and experiences as an actual nomad who experienced different settings or worlds of being. Thus I want to reflect my experiences also to the Deleuzian ontology of nomad. I unfold the analysis of Otherness and ontology of nomad in Deleuzian contexts in comparison to phenomenology in the next chapter, to discuss what "becoming" really means in my experiences, and how "becoming" is entangled or in conflict with the metaphysics of the Other.

Research Findings and reflections

A model of Freedom? The Deleuzian idea of becoming and the Other

The Deleuzian idea of nomad subjectivity is considered to be a powerful critical way of post-structural philosophy. The rejection of any kind of fixed identity and constant shifting of the positions of being/becoming seemed to be perfect to explain the ontology of a contemporary nomad like me.

Such a discourse is usually considered as radical critique and a political approach against a structural organisation of contemporary society and everyday life. It requires a radical change of subjectivity of experiencing being or becoming, which aiming at replacing the ontology of individual by the ontology of becoming.

Derived from the Deleuzian ontology of becoming, the idea of the Other became more obscure which, according to Kaufman (2011), opens onto an impersonal and inhuman perceptual space that is entirely beyond the realm of other people. Kaufman cites Deleuze's writing of "World without Others":

In the Other's absence, consciousness and its object are one [...] Consciousness ceases to be a light cast upon objects in order to become a pure phosphorescence of things in themselves. Robinson is but the consciousness of the island, but the consciousness of the island is the consciousness the island has of itself - it is the island in itself. We understand thus the paradox of the desert isle: the one who is shipwrecked, if he is alone, if he has lost the structure-Other, disturbs nothing of the desert isle; rather he consecrates it (Deleuze 1990:311).

Kaufman(2011)

For Deleuze, the structure-Other is to be abandoned to reach the identity of nomad and becoming. Daniel W. Smith also compared the paradigmatic differences between Levinas and Deleuze in terms of ethics, from which I can also see the fundamental deviation in ideas of the Other:

This is no doubt the point that separates Deleuze most from the ethical thinking of Emmanuel Levinas - the great philosopher of transcendence, insofar as the Other is the paradigmatic concept of transcendence [...] The ethical themes one finds in transcendent philosophies like those of Levinas and Derrida - an absolute responsibility for the other that I can never assume, or an infinite call to justice that I can never satisfy - are, from a Deleuzian point of view of immanence, imperatives whose effect is to separate me from my capacity to act. (Smith,2011)

This makes it more clear that Deleuze and Guattari view the transcendence, the structure-Other, and the ethics towards the Other as burdens to his philosophy of immanence that beyond humanism and the realm of other people. In a Deleuzian construction the Other should not exist, especially not as transcendence which is the ultimate oppression and representation of our impotence.

In my opinion Deleuzian philosophy provided both the possibility of a radical model of a liberated being in the contingent contemporary world, and potential difficulties and confusions when viewing the issues of self, otherness and identity from an individual subject's perspective.

Viewing the data of my experiences in another culture, I can see that the discomfort or the position of the Other is experienced in a structural way, so I can not deny or ignore the structures nor the Other in my experiences even though an alternative Deleuzian evaluation of becoming may sound more "liberating" in a way and could provide a better philosophical conceptualisation of my being as a nomad. Take the example of "Chineseness" understood by different people in the first story, if I would have been a Deleuzian being, the whole experience would have lost its ground to be discussed, for it would not even be a problem in the World without Others. Also in the second story of sensorial experience of my Otherness, I would get confused by the affections and the real emotions that actually went through me if I was not the subject or Self which is rather transcendental in the structure of experiencing. The experiences, confusions, emotions happened to me as reality, and they all incorporated structures of a non-Deleuzian philosophy. So even though a Deleuzian model proposed an ideal frame of liberation in

this World of becoming, there still is a gap between a World as a conceptualised philosophical being and the World as experienced by individuals.

On the other hand I am actually going through a process of becoming, since I am already a different subject compared to who I was before I travelled, lived, and studied in Nordic countries. The "becoming" is part of the experiences, but the "becoming" still can not summarise the whole condition of being nor just simply replace the structures of my identity and experiences.

So here I propose a question: can I "become" without totally giving up identity and structures as an individual? Can I become without it being a Deleuzian "becoming"?

A better way to describe my experience and condition of being would be to describe me as a "semi-Deleuzian" being. If viewed from outside, my condition of being in different cultures could be seen as a demonstration of a Deleuzian nomad, but such a condition of being as experienced through my body and mind still follows the structures of my intentionality. However, what exactly made up my intentionality and what inner structures the intentionality embraces remained out of the field of this research. Although, it could be interesting to tackle those structures in future research.

The ontological metaphor: Double Agent

Viewing the whole research I can get a relatively clear profile of the issue of ontology of being in another culture voluntarily now:

- The experience of mine being in Nordic countries is a structural experience because I always experience as the Self.
- By learning and getting familiar with the foreign culture, I gradually gained another perspective of viewing and experiencing, which sometimes conflicts with my original perspective as a subject of my home culture.
- I witness the Other within me through the perspective gained by learning and living in the other countries, so now I experience life as the Other and the Self at the same time.

- I am in a constant process of becoming because of the experiences, however, I am not becoming in a radical and political Deleuzian way, although the evaluation of "becoming" and nomadism seems suitable for me.

The points above clearly present a dilemma in theorising the ontology, that I somehow stand in the "impossible" intersection of two rather conflicting paradigms when it comes to the Other, which is phenomenology (transcendence) and Deleuzian philosophy (immanence). On the one hand I can not give up or deny the structure of my experiencing, while on the other hand I can not ignore my becoming and have difficulties understanding the overlapping of the perspectives Self and the Other in the same experience. However, I do not see this "impossibility" as necessarily disastrous, it could be a good starting point for the creation of new theories.

Compared to the ontological metaphor of the "body without organ" or "the absolute Other", I feel more like to come up with my own metaphor which can manifest my condition of being better, that is the "double agent". A double agent is clearly a production of institutions, organisations, and power relations, but yet she always stays in the enigma of identity. A double agent must have the capacity of switching between perspectives of looking, thinking, and doing. And yet she does not have to pick a side. A double agent is not being in-between cultures, but being in both cultures, with doubled perspectives and doubled identity.

She can be here and there, she be in relations instead of locations. If I would develop a theory that can theorise the being of people like me who choose to experience another culture neither because of imperialistic desire nor passive choice forced by living conditions, I would like to develop the metaphor of double agent. It is a philosophical state of being where a person's freedom is expanded by experiencing cultures and languages instead of a culture and a language.

A double agent actually lives in a sphere where few people share the space, it is neither here nor there, it is between here and there, and beyond here and there. The sphere is where a human being is freed by those double "burdens". Because seeing the different interpretations of one thing (herself for example) by different cultures and discourses

providing her the disillusion of the hegemony of one language and one symbolic system, she instead read the world through languages, through juxtapositions of languages, thus she is freed from sovereignty of either language. In cultures and languages she also witness the contingency of "we" and "they", so she realises there is no absolute other nor absolute body of the Other, but only an infinite desire of making the Other. So she stops dwelling between "we" and "they", a double agent must not choose between either, she must embrace both.

If one always need the Object to recognise her freedom, then for a double agent the Object is not the Other, neither of the cultures she is living in, but the fixity in territories of imagination and identity itself in both cultures. The Object is not the dwarfed Other as any imagined human groups or any faraway lands, but the poisonous desire and fixity embedded in our perceptions and cultures. If one must have desire to be, the desire should be the desire of love and criticism towards the poisonous kind of desire that objectifies the Other to achieve satisfaction.

Visual methods and art, as approaches to tackle issues of ontology and subjectivity

One inspiration I got from doing this research is how art can be involved in academic inquiries of philosophy. Artistic research has been more and more accepted as a valid methodology of qualitative research, art making has been in collaborations with studies on the field of education, psychology, anthropology and so on, and the "borders" of research through art keeps expanding.

Although focused on ethnocultural aspects as well, the core inquiry of this research is an ontological question. Traditionally there were limited methods in doing theoretical studies of philosophy, especially ontology. Philosophers build their theories based on logic, thought experiments, and supporting or inspiring materials from the development of natural science (for example Karen Barad's (2007) ontology and quantum physics). However, ontology of a human subject is not completely a matter of physical possession of the physical space, it is to a large extent a matter of consciousness, emotions, desires,

and ethics. As phenomenology provides the paradigm of inquiring the being through subjective experience, I consider art as a resourceful platform for reflecting conditions and experiences of being that includes a humanistic aspect. Because art can fill up the space of academic languages, which includes the aesthetic aspects of an experience and expressive contents from the subject that can speak to human empathy and affections.

As the constructors of artistic methodology argued, the “nature” of knowledge making and learning was never a system of segregations and fixations among disciplines and paradigms, the dynamic process of perceiving always involve different structures of epistemological functions of human. Philosophy has always been influencing the creation of art throughout history, and art can also be a way to tackle philosophical questions, especially in disciplines as ontology and ethics which involves subjectivity to a large extent.

This research can be seen as an experiment of testing artistic research as a method and methodology in tackling philosophical questions of ontology, and an attempt to perform interdisciplinary inquiries through dialogues among different paradigms of humanistic studies. Although the research itself is still far from a good example to show a model of merging and paradigms in knowledge producing, I believe with communications between art and philosophy through bridges of theoretical and practical languages, there is a potential of producing multi-dimensional knowledge that talks to people both in aesthetics and reasoning systems.

A touch in Lacanian psychoanalysis in terms of the perception of the Other and Self

Throughout the inquiries of this research I have encountered thousands of theories and paradigms of viewing the phenomenon from different lenses and angles. While each of them inspired me and taught me a lot, some have left stronger impact and triggered more motivations of further inquiry in me.

By making the Art work and reflecting on it, I have dipped my toes in the pool of psychoanalysis. Lacan is the name I read a lot, not only from theories and histories of film

art, but also when it comes the concept of the Other and the ontology of the Subject. When analysing the second story and coming up with expressive visual interpretations of it, I found Lacanian philosophy and psychoanalysis a resourceful frame on which I can carry out research design and analysis. Although I did not involve much of Lacanian theories in the analysis of this research in a verbal way, I think the art work has already spoken words from the very theoretical frame. And I would very much like to continue the inquiry of the Other looking into Lacanian theories.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, from the analysis of the research what I can see now is that the experience and phenomenological otherness is experienced and perceived through a certain structure of my mind, however I do not quite know what the inner structure of intentionality really is and how it functions. Lacanian theories of subjectivity, the Other, and Desire, I think, could offer a lens to look into the “dark” field of individual intentionality in experience and perception constructions.

As Sean Homer (2005) suggested, Lacan was philosophically a phenomenologist because he agreed that objects do not exist independently as things in the world separate from our perception of them but are intimately linked to human consciousness. So with the theoretical tools of phenomenology and Lacanian psychoanalysis, I could potentially form a multidimensional elaboration of the Other as a concept and phenomenon in the intercultural World of nowadays.

From the shallow dip into Lacanian psychoanalysis I have already noticed two concepts that I found relevant and worthy of looking into, the “Mirror Stage” in the formation of “I”, and the “Phallus” as a metaphoric model of Desire.

References

- Achebe, C. (1977). An image of Africa. *The Massachusetts Review*, 18(4), 782-794.
- Adams, T. E., Ellis, C. and Jones, S. H. (2017). Autoethnography. In J. Matthes, C. S. Davis and R. F. Potter (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods* doi:10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011
- Arnheim, R. (1974). *Art and visual perception*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1983). The other question.... *Screen*, 24(6), 18-36.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2013). *Nation and narration*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American sociological review*, 465-480.
- Borgdorff, H. (2011). *The production of knowledge in artistic research*. na.
- Bouchard, G. (2010). What is interculturalism. *McGill LJ*, 56, 435.
- Braidotti, R. (1996). Nomadism with a difference: Deleuze's legacy in a feminist perspective. *Man and World*, 29(3), 305-314.
- Butler, J. (2015). *Senses of the subject*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810.
- Chang, H. (2016). *Autoethnography as method*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Clammer, J., Poirier, S., & Schwimmer, E. (Eds.). (2004). *Figured worlds: Ontological obstacles in intercultural relations* (2nd ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.
- Creed, B. (1998). Film and psychoanalysis. *The Oxford guide to film studies*, 77-90.
- D'Andrea, A. (2006). Neo-nomadism: A theory of post-identitarian mobility in the global age. *Mobilities*, 1(1), 95-119.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2016). *A thousand plateaus* (7. ed.). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Ellingson, L. L. (2009). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical social research/Historische sozialforschung*, 273-290.
- Fabian, J. (1983). *Time and the other*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Jagodzinski, J. (2005). *Music in youth culture: A Lacanian approach* (p. x321). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kallio-Tavin, M. (2013). *Encountering Self, Other and the Third*. (Dissertation, Aalto University, Helsinki).
- Kaufman, E. (2016). Ethics and the world without others. In N. J. Jun & D. W. Smith (Eds.), *Deleuze and ethics*. (p. 108-122). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Klein, J. (2010). What is artistic research. *Journal for Artistic Research*. Retrieved from <https://www.jar-online.net/what-artistic-research>.

- Levinas, E. (1979). *Infinity and totality*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- MacDougall, D. (2006). *The corporeal image: Film, ethnography, and the senses*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Matheson, R. (2010). *Husserl: A guide for the perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *Phenomenon of perception*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Naifeh, K. H. (2019). Encountering the Other: The White Shadow. *Jung Journal*, 13(2), 7-19.
- Noyes, J. (2004). Nomadism, nomadology, postcolonialism: By way of introduction. *Interventions*, 6(2), 159-168.
- Richards, G. (2015). The new global nomads: Youth travel in a globalizing world. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 40(3), 340-352.
- Sartre, J.-P. (2003). *Being and nothingness*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Simons, M. A. (1986). Beauvoir and Sartre: The philosophical relationship. *Yale French Studies*, (72), 165-179.
- Smith, D. W. (2011). Deleuze and the question of desire: Towards an immanent theory of ethics. In N. J. Jun & D. W. Smith (Eds.), *Deleuze and ethics*. (p. 123-141). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Smith, J. (2016). *Experiencing phenomenology, An introduction*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Sullivan, G. (2011). Artistic cognition and creativity. In Biggs, M., & Karlsson, H. (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts*. (p. 99-119). Abingdon: Routledge.

Sutherland, T. (2014). Intensive mobilities: figurations of the nomad in contemporary theory. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32(5), 935-950.

Thornton, P. H. (2012). The institutional logics perspective: Foundations, research, and theoretical elaboration. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vik, T. A., & Bute, J. J. (2009). Utilizing crystallization in qualitative methods. *Review of Communication*, 9(4), 340-343.

Walsh, G., & Lehter, F. (1972). The phenomenology of the social world. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Zahavi, D. (Ed.). (2012). The Oxford handbook of contemporary phenomenology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix

Story Three: *The Visions of Telefonplan*:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WfsGwncemUx4xCNh0ohxKTTSOG8mYQqk/view?usp=sharing>

The Difficulty of Being:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ap3McQTU2m5adWR0uxKGyhwOhiCvge55/view?usp=sharing>

*Clicking the links will automatically send a request to the author for access to the video archives.